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SUBJECT: SCENE SETTER FOR THE VISIT TO MEXICO OF FBI DEPUTY  
DIRECTOR JOHN S. PISTOLE, MAY 21-23, 2008

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Charles V. Barclay.  
Reasons: 1.4 (b),(d).

11. (U) Welcome to Mexico City. Mexico is key to USG success in combating a wide array of transnational security threats which undermine our ability to confront global terrorism. A stew of widespread criminality, drug trafficking, corruption and impunity has created an enabling environment for a variety of ill-intended elements here. There is much good news, however: the U.S. - Mexico relationship on security issues, including counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics, is excellent and we have no evidence that foreign terrorist organizations have gained a foothold here. Equally important, a resolute president is taking aggressive actions to combat organized crime that will make Mexico an even more valued partner in years to come. Your visit here will provide an excellent overview of Mexico's challenging security environment. While your interlocutors will have well-defined opinions on the nature of the security challenges facing Mexico -- that do not always reflect our own thinking -- engaging them will advance our dialogue greatly.

#### Mexico's Security Environment and Commitment

12. (U) Mexico remains relatively inhospitable to local and international terrorist groups intending to operate within the country. In July and September of 2007, the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), a domestic guerrilla group, attacked oil and gas pipelines, causing significant economic damage. Several months ago, this group issued a communiqué threatening CISEN, Mexico's civilian intelligence organization. Attacks, however, are sporadic and it is doubtful domestic groups have the wherewithal to make an impact with sustained armed operations. More recently, EPR and the GOM have been floating possible scenarios under which they would entertain a dialogue but have yet to reach agreement.

13. (S) Mexican authorities are receptive to concerns raised by foreign governments regarding potential infiltration by foreign groups, stepping up security and surveillance when circumstances warrant, investigating special interest aliens and taking action against human trafficking and smuggling operations that might be exploited by terrorists. (A March 2007 procedural change, however, has complicated this picture. Instead of holding SIAs in one central facility near the capital, migration authorities now detain and release such individuals where they are originally found, complicating our ability to investigate and track them. CBP has been working with senior migration officials, who are sympathetic to our concerns. On a positive note, CISEN, which is our primary interlocutor on counterterrorism, has allowed USG officers to interview foreign nationals detained at Mexican immigration detention centers dispersed around the country for potential CT information of interest.)

14. (U) Mexico strengthened its anti-terrorism regime last

year with passage of legislation outlawing terrorist financing and associated money laundering, significantly toughening penalties for a variety of terror-related activities in the process. While the legislation lacked some important provisions, such as assets forfeiture measures, it represented a significant step forward in suppressing those who plan, facilitate, finance or commit terrorist acts. It is also worth noting, that the judicial reform bill passed in February includes provisions for asset forfeiture. Money laundering remains a serious problem and Mexico needs to dedicate more resources to combat this problem.

15. (S) The GOM coordinates well with the USG in a variety of counter-terror areas. Mexico has begun exploring programs designed to deter terrorists from using Mexico's seaports as staging areas for introducing terror-related materials. Mexico cooperates with USG elements in countering money laundering activity and its military is actively looking to gain greater control over its vast maritime zone through equipment upgrades and counter drug initiatives. CISEN and DNI's Open Source Center recently negotiated a formal information sharing arrangement which will permit subscription to each other's open source products.

16. (U) In July 2007, the Mexican Government created the Specialized High-Level Committee on International Disarmament, Terrorism, and Security -- otherwise known as the National Authority -- to "unify, coordinate, design, and articulate the government of Mexico's public policies to comply with international obligations on disarmament, nonproliferation and terrorism." CISEN is the titular head of the National Authority which is to serve as a coordination

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entity. The other permanent members include the Foreign Ministry (SRE), the Finance Ministry, the Defense Ministry (SEDENA), the Navy (SEMAR), the Attorney General's Office (PGR), the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP), and the Transportation and Public Communications Ministry. The National Authority consists of six permanent working groups including nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons, conventional weapons, terrorism, administrative and legal harmonization and international security. Tasks undertaken by the working groups include legislative and administrative harmonization; export controls consultation; development of a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives (CBRNE) national controls list; the national industry registrar; industry outreach and awareness; enforcement; inspection, verification and control; capacity building; and intelligence sharing.

17. (U) Areas of concern remain. Mexico's large territory and traditionally weak enforcement of the movement of peoples and goods both at its borders and within Mexico make it a potential transit point for terrorists intending to launch attacks against the U.S. Moreover, in recent years, criminality has taken on a growing presence in Mexico and engendered concern that the government had lost significant ground in many locales to narco-cartels. Rampant lawlessness, widespread corruption and the government's long-standing inability to confront either had been seen as troubling threat indicators to those watching our southern border for signs of potential terrorist infiltration.

#### Aggressive New Posture on Law Enforcement and Security

18. (U) In the past year and a half, however, the GOM has taken aggressive steps to turn the situation around. Since taking office, Calderon has launched anti-drug operations in ten states, raised pay for the military, and replaced numerous high-ranking federal police officers. He launched improvements to inter-agency communications and oversaw a successful effort to pass legislation unifying federal police forces and reform the judicial system. These enhancements, if fully implemented, should strengthen the GOM's security capabilities across the board and make it better able to

confront potential challenges from all manner of ill-intended non-state actors. For the time being, the government's aggressive posture has provoked violent struggles within and among cartels as well as attacks on security personnel producing record numbers of drug related homicides including the killing of police and military officials

¶9. (U) Calderon has also placed a high premium on strengthened law enforcement cooperation with the U.S. which extends on cases run out of the Attorney General's Office ranging from child pornography and fugitives to kidnapping and money laundering. He has significantly expanded the number of criminal extraditions, instructed key members of his security team to engage their USG counterparts fully and worked closely with us to develop a joint approach to counter-narcotics through such efforts as the Merida Initiative, a program to provide Mexico with \$1.4 billion in assistance to help it combat organized crime. Post's Office of the Legal AttachQ has provided Mexico's Public Security Secretariat (SSP) with training in a variety of fields including counterterrorism, interview techniques, and fingerprinting; we also sponsored approximately 60 officials at FBI Training Academy last year for the LEADS Course. The emerging pattern of bilateral cooperation across the board is highly positive and likely to take on momentum in years to come.

#### Old Attitudes Complicate Dialogue on Security Issues

¶10. (U) Despite Mexico's commitment to broaden bilateral cooperation, there are differences between the U.S. and Mexican approaches to global affairs to be considered when seeking dialogue with Mexican interlocutors on security and foreign policy issues. Mexico is still developing an "over-the-horizon" view of the world and the potential security threats it throws up. It does not share our position on the need for robust, forward-based defense of our security interests in the Near East or South Asia. It places less emphasis on the potential threat to the region emanating from groups such as Al-Qaida. It is less nervous about Iranian diplomatic, economic and political outreach in the region than we are.

¶11. (C) Closer to home, Mexico has traditionally sought to play a regional role that is independent of the U.S. With the exception of the Fox administration, Mexican governments -- including Calderon's -- have generally sought to maintain warm ties with Cuba. Similarly, until recently, the GOM had

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sought to avoid conflict with the current Venezuelan government. Mexican officials and citizens alike have viewed the activities of populist governments, and even certain armed groups, in the region as relatively benign. One senior official in Mexico's Foreign Relations Secretariat recently told us that even the FARC had its "historical context" which conveyed a certain amount of legitimacy to the organization. You should remember that Mexicans still view global and regional security issues through a different prism than we do when discussing such issues.

¶12. (C) Comment: The Calderon administration has committed to significantly strengthening the security relationship with the United States, but remains keen to balance this effort against its desire to be seen in the region as an influential -- and independent -- actor. Security cooperation, particularly in the area of counter terrorism initiatives, will necessarily be low key for some time to come. That said, security cooperation in combating organized crime has never been better. We expect your visit will only reinforce burgeoning cooperation we are observing across the board when it comes to law enforcement activities. End Comment.

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